

To the Federal Communications Commission:

As a member of the public, I am extremely concerned about the possibility of future further de-regulation of the media industry. I hope that after your committee re-evaluates the issue, you will find that it is in the best interest of the public not to further increase broadcast ownership possibilities.

Since 1996, when FCC drastically loosened broadcast ownership restrictions, we have seen a dramatic trend towards oligopoly. Fewer and fewer companies own more and more media outlets, and have greater and greater control of information dissemination.

There are many reasons why it is important not to concentrate so much power in so few hands, however I would like to offer two personal examples of how those changes affected me as an individual. Personally, I feel that the 1996 de-regulations decreased my standard of living, and had a detrimental effect on the public welfare.

First, it seems to me that almost every radio station on the dial is owned by Clear Channel Communications. I frequently take long-distance driving trips, but no matter what state I am in, I hear the same music and talk. I get the feeling that to reduce costs, Clear Channel has ceased differentiating its markets. Instead of customizing radio stations to the particular segment of the public that will be hearing each radio station (e.g. geographic area), Clear Channel seems to have created a 'generic' radio station to play in all markets. As a result, consumers are left feeling dissatisfied with the product. However, efforts to show this dissatisfaction by withdrawing support are difficult, because changing the dial often leads to yet another Clear Channel station. I live in an area where there are few radio stations - when one company owns the majority of them, this serves to further limit consumer choice

Secondly, much of the programming is pre-recorded at a separate location from where it is broadcasted. Not only does this highlight the issues I cited above, but it is even more problematic in emergency situations. Here in North Dakota, we recently had a fatal train explosion that released toxic clouds of anhydrous ammonia gas over our town of Minot. Since this was a local disaster, the nationally-owned media outlets did not change their pre-recorded programming. To anyone watching TV or listening to the radio, it was as if nothing traumatic had happened. The local authorities needed to get important information out to the public about this toxic cloud of gas, and this was delayed. Apparently, they had a very hard time finding anyone who could change the programming and get the information out.

I hope that these two personal examples help illustrate why I believe that further loosening of the restrictions on broadcast ownership would limit consumer choice and be detrimental to the public good. As an American citizen living in the North Dakota prairie, I hope that the FCC will recognize that the public interest is far more important than that of a few big businesses looking to make even more money.

Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter.

Respectfully,

Danielle Mansour